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SUBJECT: FOREIGN POLICY DISCOMFORTS; DPP DISCOMFORTS

Classified By: AIT Acting Director David J. Keegan, Reason(s):  
1.4 (B/D)

11. (C) Former Taiwan Foreign Minister Tien Hung-mao told AIT earlier this week that he has become increasingly uncomfortable with the green tilt of MOFA and its diplomatic representation abroad since he left office in February 2002. More and more, he complained, Taiwan's representatives and ambassadors have been selected for their greenness (pro-independence sentiments).

12. (C) Tien explained that his top priority when he took office as President Chen Shui-bian's first Foreign Minister in May 2000 had been to maintain continuity and reassure friends and allies that Taiwan foreign policy would not radically change under the DPP. President Chen, on the other hand, had from the very outset pushed his independence agenda, greatly complicating Tien's work as Foreign Minister. Noting Chen's recent non-starter initiative to meet Hu Jintao at the November 2005 APEC leaders' meeting, Tien explained that he, Tien, had similarly tried to utilize the November 2001 Shanghai APEC meeting as a stage for Taiwan and the PRC to meet. The difference, Tien explained, was that he, Tien, had worked for weeks trying to get Chen and his advisors to focus on the Shanghai meeting so that he could prepare the way with the U.S., PRC and other attendees. Chen, however, waited until one week before the meeting to announce that Lee Teng-hui would represent Taiwan -- too late, Tien lamented, and causing Taiwan to completely miss an opportunity to improve cross-strait relations.

13. (C) Tien, who grew up in Tainan and just a bicycle ride from Chen Shui-bian, said he was surprised how much Chen and DPP support has slipped in Tainan over the past eight months. When he, Tien, visited Tainan last week, he found that some of his bentu (Taiwanese) friends were disenchanted, with some even considering voting for the KMT's Ma Ying-jeou in the 2008 presidential election, because -- ironically, Tien noted -- the once black gold (corrupt) KMT has become the party of reform and cleanliness under Ma. Last month, the former DPP Mayor of Tainan, in the presence of Tien Hung-mao, told the Director that the popularity of Chen and the DPP had declined substantially in Tainan. Unhappiness over repeated corruption scandals in the ruling DPP had alienated Tainan voters and given Ma Ying-jeou a perfect opportunity to establish himself as the anti-corruption candidate. Ma, the mayor added, is easily the most popular candidate for 2008 in Tainan.

KEEGAN